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Social media policy for school staff

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This policy was approved by the Board of Trustees on

Policy review date:

December 2020

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy will make clear what standards are expected of anyone who works for the school and uses social media as well as what actions may be taken when it is considered a member of staff may have breached this policy.
- 1.2 This policy applies to all staff use of social media, including:
- 1.2.1 on behalf of the school;
 - 1.2.2 in their wider professional lives; and
 - 1.2.3 in their personal lives.
- 1.3 In this policy, we define **social media** to mean:
‘Websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.’
- 1.4 In this policy, the word **staff** includes temporary and casual staff, students and volunteers who have any contact with children during school hours or when on a school activity and in certain circumstances specific volunteers at the discretion of the Designated Safeguard Lead.
- 1.5 In this policy, the word **parents** is used to mean the parents, carers and others with parental responsibility for a pupil at the school.
- 1.6 This policy works alongside other legislation, DFE statutory guidance, and other school policies such as Code of Conduct and Media Policy

2 Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to;

- (a) clarify what the school considers to be appropriate and inappropriate use of social networking by staff;
- (b) encourage social networking to be used in a beneficial and positive way;
- (c) safeguard staff, pupils, parents and members of the public from abuse through social networking;
- (d) safeguard the reputation of the school and employers from unwarranted abuse through social networking; and
- (e) set out the procedures that will be followed where it is considered that staff have inappropriately or unlawfully used social networking.

3 Responsibility and accountability

3.1 School Management Group

- 3.1.1 should ensure that all existing and new staff are trained and become familiar with this policy.
- 3.1.2 must ensure that any allegations raised in respect of access to social networking sites are investigated promptly and appropriately, in accordance with this policy, the school's disciplinary procedure, Code of Conduct and Digital Image Policy

3.2 School staff

- 3.2.1 should ensure that they are familiar with the contents of this policy.
- 3.2.2 should raise any queries or areas of concern they have relating to the use of social networking sites and interpretation of this policy – with the Safeguarding Team and / or HR Mandate as appropriate
- 3.2.3 must comply with this policy.

3.3 School trustees

- 3.3.1 will review this policy and its application every 3 years (or more frequently as required); and
- 3.3.2 should ensure that their own behaviour is in line with this policy

4 When using social media at any time

- 4.1 Staff **must not** place a child at risk of harm.
- 4.1.1 Staff **must** follow statutory and school safeguarding procedures at all times when using social media.
- 4.1.2 Staff **must** report all situations where any child is at potential risk by using relevant statutory and school child protection procedures.
- 4.2 Staff **must not** allow their use of social media to affect their ability to do their job in any way.
- 4.2.1 Social media relationships **must** be declared with other personal relationships or interests whenever necessary or appropriate.
- 4.3 Staff **must** maintain the reputation of the school, its staff, its pupils, its parents, its governors, its wider community and their employers.
- 4.4 Staff **must not** contribute or access any social media content which is illegal, discriminatory, sexual, or otherwise offensive when linked in any way to the school. This link could be, as examples, by identification with the school, during the working day, on school premises or when using school equipment. Such behaviour may also result in criminal proceedings.
- 4.4.1 Staff **must** recognise that contributing or accessing any social media content which is illegal, discriminatory, sexual or otherwise offensive during personal use could lead to damage to their professional reputation or damage to the reputation of the school. This damage would breach the social media policy. And, again, such behaviour may also result in criminal proceedings.
- 4.5 Staff **must not** use social media to criticise or insult their school, its staff, its pupils, its parents, its governors or its wider community.
- 4.5.1 Staff should be aware that there are other, more appropriate, methods of raising valid concerns about their school and its staff.
- 4.6 Staff **must not** use social media to harass, bully or intimidate any pupil, parent, member of staff, trustee or other member of the wider school community.
- 4.7 Staff **must not** breach school confidentiality.
- 4.7.1 School staff **must** follow their school data protection responsibilities when using social media.
- 4.7.2 Staff **must not** reveal any other private or confidential school matters when using any social media.

- 4.8 Staff are responsible for their actions (and its consequences) whenever they use social media.
- 4.8.1 Staff are responsible for **all** their social media content.
- 4.8.2 Staff must understand that social media offers no guarantee of privacy and that any content they produce can be shared more widely by others. A member of staff's professional reputation or the reputation of the school could be damaged by content, perhaps which was intended to be private, being shared more widely than intended.
- 4.8.3 Staff would still be held responsible for any consequential breach of this policy as they were responsible for producing the original content.
- 4.9 Staff are responsible for the configuration and use of any personal social media accounts they have. They are responsible for determining the level of security and privacy of **all** their social media content.
- 4.10 Staff **must** raise all doubts, questions and concerns related to social media with the Designated Safeguard Lead. Staff must seek advice if they are not sure if any particular use of social media (or a related action) is appropriate or would potentially breach this policy. Staff cannot rely on their ignorance or lack of knowledge to defend any breach of this policy.

5 When using social media on behalf of the school

York Steiner School may use social media as a communications channel to engage with the wider community.

- 5.1 Staff **must** be given explicit permission to use social media on behalf of the school by the School Management Group.
- 5.2 These staff **must** follow all related procedures when acting on behalf of the school.
- 5.3 Staff **must** not use school social media for any personal discussions or for any individual personal matters even if initiated by other members of the school community. Users must be directed to more appropriate communication channels.

6 When using social media in staff's wider professional life

Social media is a useful tool for engaging and collaborating with the wider education community.

- 6.1 Staff **must** be clear that their social media content is personal and not endorsed or supported by their school.
- 6.2 Staff **can** identify their school where appropriate but cannot use account names, school branding or anything else that could imply that the content is official school content.
- 6.3 Staff **must** be particularly careful to not reveal any details of staff, pupils, parents or other members of the school community that make it possible to identify any individuals.
- 6.4 Staff **must** use appropriate behaviour and language at all times. As a guide, this should be similar to that which would be used when taking part in a face-to-face meeting with other education professionals.

7 When using social media in staff's personal life

- 7.1 The personal use of social media must neither interfere with a member of staff's ability to maintain their professional reputation nor impact on the reputation of the school.
- 7.2 Staff **must** take all reasonable steps to ensure the proper separation of their professional and personal lives.
- 7.2.1 Staff **must not** use school social networking accounts for personal content.
- 7.2.2 Staff **must** respect the wishes and privacy of any other members of their school community with whom they have personal social media contact.
- 7.3 Staff **must not** use personal social media with any child with whom they have, or have had, a staff/pupil relationship. This includes ex-pupils until they reach the age of 18.
- Staff should think very carefully before having any children, other than family members, as 'friends' on any social media platform as this potentially puts them in a position of vulnerability and risk. Members of the Safeguarding Team are always available for advice
- 7.4 Staff **must not** use personal social media with anyone with whom they have a staff/parent relationship.
- 7.5 Staff **must** make sure that their personal social media activities take into account who they have social media relationships with – particularly any other members of school community – and moderate their social media behaviour accordingly.
- 7.6 Personal use of social media at school:
- 7.6.1 School staff **can** make reasonable personal use of social media during the working day or while at their school. This must not interfere with any work activities.
- 7.6.2 Staff can only use social media when no pupils are present and during breaks or non-directed time.
- 7.6.3 Staff **can** only use personal devices with social media while in the staff room or classroom when no children are present.

8 Excessive use of social media at school

- 8.1 Staff **must not** spend an excessive amount of time while at the school on personal use of social media. They must ensure that use of social media does not interfere with their duties or relationships with colleagues.

9 Monitoring use of social media on school equipment

- 9.1 The school reserves the right to monitor **all** staff internet use, including when staff are making personal use of social media, on any school systems or equipment. Misuse of social media – even personal use – on school equipment is a breach of this policy.

10 Disciplinary action over social media use

- 10.1 All staff are required to adhere to this policy. Staff should note that any breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action (Please refer to the schools Disciplinary Procedure) . Serious breaches of this policy, for example incidents of bullying of colleagues or social media activity causing serious damage to the school, may constitute gross misconduct and lead to summary dismissal.
- 10.2 Similarly, where there is a serious breach of this policy, action may be taken in respect of other members of staff who are not employees (volunteers) which may result in the termination of their appointment.

11 If you have any concerns

- 11.1 When using social media, you may have a concern about what you are seeing or being told by another user which has safeguarding implications or may cause harm to the reputation of the school and/or its community. If you have any such concerns you should contact the chair of the School Management Group, the Designated Safeguard Lead (DSL), or human resources for advice.
- 11.2 If a member of staff becomes aware that a pupil (or group of pupils) or parent has made inappropriate/insulting/threatening comments about them, or other staff members, on a social networking site; then they should consider reporting this to the Designated Safeguard Lead so that the appropriate process can be followed and support can be offered to the employee.